

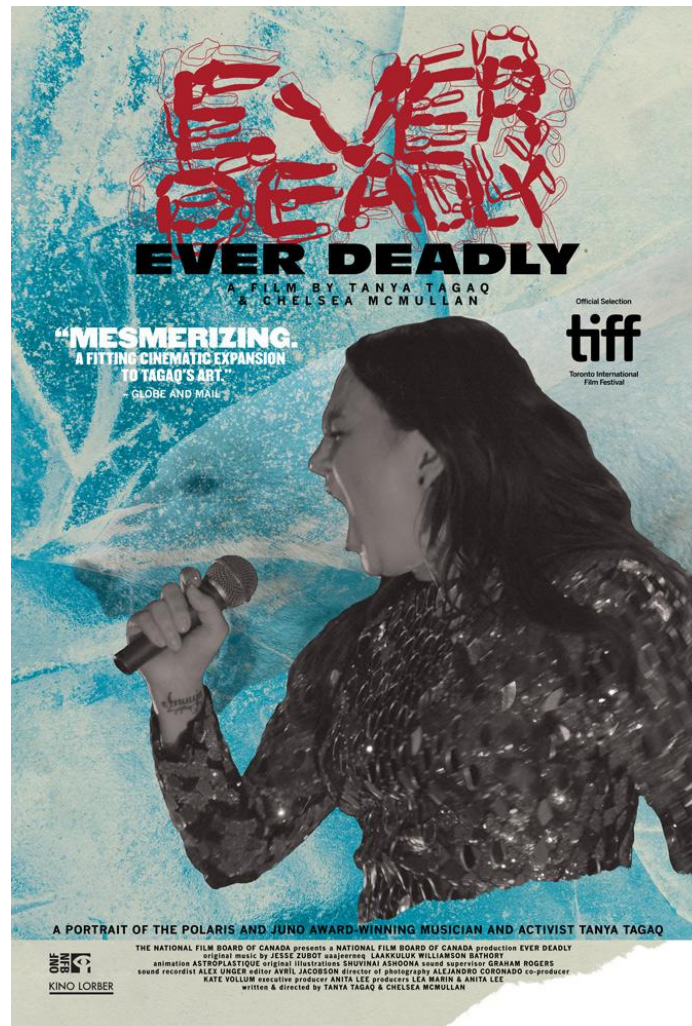
# KINO LORBER

## EVER DEADLY

A Film by Tanya Tagaq and Chelsea McMullan

**Official Selection**

Toronto International Film Festival  
Vancouver International Film Festival  
International First Peoples' Festival



Canada | 2022 | 90 min | Color | English and Inuktitut with English subtitles

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## SYNOPSIS

Throughout her ground-breaking career, Inuk throat singer Tanya Tagaq has always had an intimate relationship with the Nuna – the Land – a living, breathing organism present in her improvised performances. Winner of the Juno and Polaris Prize and collaborator of the Kronos Quartet, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Saul Williams, and Björk, hers is a voice that, according to the New York Times, “demands full attention, whether she’s whispering in her softest register or howling at the sky.” *Ever Deadly* weaves together intimate concert footage of Tagaq alongside moving personal reflections, stunning sequences filmed in Nunavut, and hand-drawn animation by Inuk artist Shuvinai Ashoona to seamlessly bridge history, landscapes, stories, and songs with pain, anger, and triumph – all through the expressions of one of the most innovative musical performers of our time.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Many people have approached me with a proposal to engage in making a documentary. I tend towards being camera shy (offstage), so it wasn't until I was approached by a friend that a documentary happened. Chelsea was a friend I met through Rae Spoon. They did a documentary called *My Prairie Home*. I watched it on an airplane. I love Rae; it was so nice to see them onscreen and to see them being portrayed in the right way.

So we jumped into making *Ever Deadly*. Chelsea pushes. I pull. We got riding the same caribou and off we went! This process has been exhilarating and interesting. Bringing the crew up to Nunavut was the highlight for me. Realizing that's how I feel in the South, in your culture. I am always cautious, not quite knowing how to behave, not having a handle on the rules. Watching the crew learn how to drive an ATV on the tundra and take in the majesty of the land gave me a sense of peace. Thank you to Chelsea and the crew for taking the time to film.

The concert—now in COVID times I drool and giggle and writhe in joy with the memory of the moments when the music took control and gave me freedom. We will have that again soon, but for now, enjoy the screen. Enjoy this concert footage interspersed with my family history, Canadian history, and our present and presence.

**– Tanya Tagaq, Writer and Director**

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

The first time I saw Tanya Tagaq perform, my mind was fully blown. When she walks out onto the stage, she gives you an experience. She fuses with her band to build this electric, seismic, psychedelic improvised trip that blasts through the walls of the auditorium, tearing time and space apart before pulling you deep down into the pit of your soul. I felt awestruck by the power of her art. I was a little bit obsessed; it was such a multi-sensory event, I immediately wanted to know how she thought about cinema.

Recently, I revisited some notes I'd taken in our very first discussions about making a film together, and Tanya already had a crystal-clear idea of what the film was going to be. She told me it needs to have a lot of blood, and we talked about the towering ice flows of her childhood memories. She wanted exploding muskox in it. Literally one of the very first things she told me was that we had to interview her Mom about the government relocation and it had to be in her language.

Non-negotiable. It took us five years to really delve into everything we needed to and get all the pieces necessary, but almost everything she saw in the beginning is in there. She had the vision, and I really felt like my job within the context of the film was to try to bring all of her ideas and the imagery she was describing to the screen. Improvisation was the guiding principle throughout, from the way we approached capturing the concert as one single improvised shot, to Shuvinai Ashoona improvising drawings based on Tanya's words, which we turned into animations, to our process of live editing the film to ensure we were led by intuition.

Having the opportunity to participate in channeling Tanya's art, voice and life into film has been the greatest creative endeavor of my life. *Ever Deadly* is meant to be an experience, to flood over you and take you on a journey guided by a live performance for the ages. In the process we touch on many parts of who Tanya is—the unparalleled musical talent, the bold voice speaking truth to power, the poet and philosopher reaching deep into herself, how fiercely she loves her family and how relentlessly she fights. Immerse yourself, let it carry you away, but don't for a second think the cinematic frame could ever hope to contain Tanya Tagaq. Not a chance.

**– Chelsea McMullan, Writer and Director**

## FILMMAKING TEAM BIOS

### **Tanya Tagaq | Writer and Director**

“Tagaq doesn’t so much sing as plug herself into the Earth.” – *Pitchfork*

From Nunavut, Tanya Tagaq is an improvisational singer, avant-garde composer and author. A member of the Order of Canada, a Polaris Music Prize and JUNO Award winner and recipient of multiple honorary doctorates, Tagaq is an original disruptor, a world-changing figure at the forefront of seismic social, political and environmental change.

In its many forms, Tagaq’s art challenges static ideas of genre and culture, and contends with themes of Indigenous Rights, colonialism, environmentalism, racism and violence against women and girls, in particular MMIWG (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls).

Tagaq’s bestselling, award-winning debut novel, *Split Tooth*, has been translated into German and French. A full-length feature documentary on Tanya’s life, career and art is currently in production. *Split Tooth* on stage, a collaboration with Kaneza Schaal and Christopher Myers, is scheduled to debut in Dusseldorf and BAM in 2021.

Tagaq has collaborated and recorded with Saul Williams, Kronos Quartet, Bjork, A Tribe Called Red, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Fucked Up and more. She has composed pieces for the Kronos Quartet and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and created a sound installation for the National Maritime Museum in London.

Tagaq has performed at many prestigious international festivals, including Dark Mofo, Bonnaroo, Big Ears, the Helsinki Festival, Aarhus and many more, and venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center.

From CBS’s *60 Minutes* to NPR, *Pitchfork*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Guardian* and more, Tagaq’s music and writing has been covered by major publications in the USA, UK, Europe and beyond.

### **Chelsea McMullan | Writer and Director**

Chelsea McMullan (they/them) is one of Canada’s leading filmmakers. They make documentary, experimental narrative, and hybrid films that explore the work of leading international artists. Chelsea’s next feature, *Ever Deadly*, created in collaboration with Tanya Tagaq, captures Tanya’s incandescent and unforgettable artistic voice through the frame of a live concert performance shot in a single take, punctuated by documentary elements and animation by the internationally renowned Inuit artist Shuvinai Ashoona. Chelsea’s previous features, including *My*

*Prairie Home*, a musical documentary about the pioneering transgender musician Rae Spoon, have premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, True/False, and other leading festivals and venues internationally. They have also directed for television, including episodes of the documentary series *This Is Pop* (Netflix/Crave) and *In the Making* (CBC). Premiering on CBC and on broadcast channels internationally in 2023, their new documentary series *Swan Song* follows the National Ballet of Canada as it rebuilds from the COVID-19 crisis to mount one of the most ambitious productions in its history. Chelsea has also made numerous acclaimed short films about and in collaboration with major international artists such as Eileen Myles, Zhang Huan, Isabelle Marant and Ken Lum.

### **Lea Marin | Producer**

From 2006 to 2021, Lea Marin was a producer with the NFB's Ontario Studio in Toronto. A graduate of the Canadian Film Centre's Producers' Lab, Lea worked on a wide range of NFB projects, including Michèle Stephenson's *Stateless* (Hispaniola Productions/NFB), winner of the Special Jury Prize for a Canadian Feature Documentary at Hot Docs 2020, and Charles Officer's *Unarmed Verses*, which won the Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award at Hot Docs 2017.

Other credits included Astra Taylor's *What Is Democracy?*, Chelsea McMullan's *My Prairie Home*, and *The Portrait*, directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Hubert Davis. She is currently Director of Development, Drama, for the CBC.

### **Kate Vollum | Co-Producer**

Kate Vollum is an associate producer with the National Film Board of Canada. She has worked on many innovative projects, including the ground-breaking interactive work *Highrise* (2015), the experimental Indigenous series *Souvenir* (2015), and the NFB/CFC Open Immersion VR Lab (2016). Most recently, she has been the associate producer for several projects: *Urban.Indigenous.Proud* (2018), five films created in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres; *Ever Deadly*, a collaboration between Chelsea McMullan and Tanya Tagaq; *This is Not a Movie*, about journalist Robert Fisk, directed by Yung Chang; and *Otherly*, a series of short docs created for Instagram Stories co-produced by POV Spark and the NFB. Recent VR projects include *The Book of Distance* by Randall Okita and *Draw Me Close* by Jordan Tannahill.

### **Anita Lee | Executive Producer**

A multi-award-winning producer, Anita Lee was head of the NFB's Ontario Studio in Toronto from 2014 to 2022. She produced some of the most critically acclaimed

works in NFB history, including Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell* (2012). Recent NFB projects as executive producer include Randall Okita's *The Book of Distance* (2021 CSA, 2021 Webby, 2020 Japan Prize). Lee established the NFB's Creative Non-Fiction Immersive Lab in Toronto and was the founder of the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival. Currently, she is the Chief Programming Officer at the Toronto International Film Festival.

## **CREDITS**

### **Featuring**

Tanya Tagaq

### **Written and Directed by**

Tanya Tagaq  
Chelsea McMullan

### **Produced by**

Lea Marin  
Anita Lee

### **Executive Producer**

Anita Lee

### **Co-Producer**

Kate Vollum

### **Director of Photography**

Alejandro Coronado

### **Editor**

Avril Jacobson, CCE

### **Sound Recordist**

Alexander Unger

### **Sound Supervisor**

Graham Rogers

### **Original Illustrations by**

Shuvinai Ashoona

### **Animation by Astroplastique**

Glenn Gear Fred Casia Parissa Mohit

### **Uaajeernej**

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

### **Original Music Composed by**



Jesse Zubot

**Featuring**

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

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Inuuja Gillis

Lucas Kalluk

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**Synthesizer** Ashkan Kooshanejad

**Violin** Jesse Zubot

**Drums** Jean Martin

**Performance response to Tanya Tagaq by**

Santee Smith / Tekaronhiáhkwa

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Christine Duncan – Choir Leader

Clela Errington

Jennifer Wohrle

Jessica Stuart

Kristin Fung

Rebecca Singh

Sylvester Frank

Cathy Hluchy

Jessie Rivest

Juliet Palmer

Elise Boeur

Adriana Monti

Meiko Ando

John Creson

Jenna Marie Pinard

Erinne White

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**WinTranslation**

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**All songs performed by Tanya Tagaq**

Courtesy of Six Shooter Records

**Excerpts from SPLIT TOOTH by Tanya Tagaq**

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